

CPYRGHT

CPYRGHT

U. S. Has Role in POW Deal

By Stanley Meisler

Associated Press

President Kennedy has promised no more than sympathy to those bargaining for the release of 1113 Bay of Pigs prisoners. But the evidence is clear that he has given more.

Official statements in Washington maintain that the committee now negotiating with Fidel Castro in Cuba for the release of the prisoners is a private one, supported by private funds.

But the prisoners, if they are released, will owe their freedom in large measure to the U. S. Government.

It is doubtful that the private committee could complete a deal of such magnitude without active support of the Kennedy Administration.

There have been some reports, denied by the Administration, that the President's brother, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, has directed the Government's maneuvering in support of the committee and its attorney, James B. Donovan.

Donovan arranged the deal under which the United States returned Soviet spy Rudolph Abel to Russia in exchange for American U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers.

The Government's involvement in the Cuban prisoner negotiations was exposed somewhat yesterday when Administration sources said the Internal Revenue Service may give drug manufacturers tax deductions for donating supplies to the private committee. Senate Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield (Mont.) predicted yesterday that Congress might go along with this plan.

There was some question, however, as to whether the Government itself was giving food or medicine or money as well for the committee's cause.

Lincoln White, State Department press officer, declined comment yesterday when asked about this. White said only:

"Federal government facilities or personnel in any way they can because of the sympathetic feeling of this Government in the release of these prisoners."

This recalled a remark of President Kennedy at his news conference Dec. 12:

"This is being done by the private committee . . ." he said, "and I am very sympathetic to their efforts."

A check of the record reveals two threads running through the Government's attitude since the prisoners were captured by Castro in April 1961:

1. A feeling of responsibility by Mr. Kennedy and his



Fischetti from New York Herald Tribune Syndicate

High Tension Wires Cleared

Administration toward these Cuban refugees who, while trained and led by U. S. officers, tried and failed to invade Cuba and topple the Castro regime.

2. A sensitivity by Mr. Kennedy and his Administration to criticism, particularly from Congress, of any hint that the U. S. Government is paying ransom to Castro for the prisoners.

On Oct. 10, the New York World-Telegram and Sun said that Donovan was acting as an agent of the U. S. Government and the Kennedy Administration. The newspaper said that Attorney General Kennedy had given Donovan the assignment, telling him the White House had a "moral obligation" to free the prisoners.

Edwin Guthman, information officer for the Justice Department, quoted Attorney General Kennedy as saying "the story is untrue."

But newsmen had noticed Donovan entering and leaving Kennedy's office several times since he had become the committee's counsel. They also had noticed Kennedy meeting with Jose Miro Cardona, leader of the Cuban refugee group that had sponsored the Bay of Pigs Invasion.

None of Kennedy's meetings with Miro had been listed on the Attorney General's official calendar, and only one of Donovan's meetings had been listed.

The full story of the Kennedy Administration's role in these negotiations will likely remain untold until Donovan completes them.

CPYRGHT